

MINUTES
BROWN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
Monday, November 16, 2009
City Hall
100 N. Jefferson Street, Room 604
Green Bay, WI 54301
3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Darlene Hallet-Chair, Michael Welch-Vice Chair, Paul Kendle, Rich Aicher.

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Tom Diedrick.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob Strong, Robyn Hallet, Matt Roberts, Chip Law, Brown County Supervisor Pat Evans, Robyn Davis, Brown County Supervisor Andy Williams (4:00 p.m.), Brown County Chairman Guy Zima (4:45 p.m.).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of the minutes from the October 19, 2009, meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority.

A motion was made by M. Welch and seconded by P. Kendle to approve the minutes from the October 19, 2009, meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS:

2. Notice of Housing Authority Insurance Group Dividends for 2008.

R. Hallet stated that the Authority received \$217.25.

REPORTS:

3. Report on Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program.
 - A. Preliminary Applications
M. Roberts stated that there were 123 applications received for the month of October.
 - B. Housing Assistance Payments
M. Roberts stated that the HAP for October was \$988,510.00.
 - C. Housing Assistance Unit Count
M. Roberts stated that the unit count for October was 2,681.
 - D. Housing Quality Standard Inspection Compliance

M. Roberts stated that the failing average has reached a plateau since the summer. Re-evaluations and initial inspections fluctuate a little but overall the passing percentage is the same.

E. Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Costs and HUD 52681B

C. Law stated that ICS is \$29,092.10 under budget so far for this year. He pointed out that line 27 of the report shows the administrative fees ICS receives monthly from HUD after the BCHA's 3.6%. For November we only received \$105,000.00. He believes in December we may only receive \$100,000.00. The numbers are trending downward because of the way HUD is basing the funding on unit counts. This will chip away at the budget in November and December because we are receiving less funding.

F. SEMAP Monitoring Report

M. Roberts stated that the SEMAP is still at 100%.

G. Report of the Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

M. Roberts stated that 100 clients were maintained for October, of which 40 contribute to escrow accounts. There were two graduates for the month of October. There were two new contracts for October.

H. Report on the Housing Choice Voucher Home Ownership Option.

M. Roberts stated that the client count is 93.

4. Report on Langan Investigations Criminal Background Screening and Fraud Investigations.

C. Law stated that there were 17 investigations opened in October, with 3 investigations closed as substantiated, 1 was closed as unable to substantiate, and 13 investigations remain open.

C. Law stated that a RFP was received from Langan. Basically, if we take the way they would like to charge us going forward with the new contract, there will be a 26% to 29% increase over what they are charging now. This increase surprised ICS staff as they thought the charges would digress since ICS is doing so much with the applicants on the front end. D. Payne is continuing to negotiate with Langan. C. Law stated that he believes D. Payne has received one other RFP.

C. Law stated that the contract that they have in place with Langan has a certain fee for investigative work, which is difficult to define, and then a certain fee for background check work, which is relatively easy to define. Under the new fees Langan is proposing they are charging the same fees for both. The background checks are mostly done by sitting in front of the computer.

C. Law stated that when John Finger from HUD was in town he told ICS that nobody does fraud investigation work and background checks like they do. ICS spends 7 to 8 percent of their admin dollars for this and Mr. Finger stated that he doesn't know of anyone else who does. Langan is who ICS would rather go with

because Langan is familiar with the program, but a 29% increase is hard to swallow in this economic environment. He and D. Payne have discussed going month to month with Langan until all of this can be sorted out.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

5. Discussion and possible action on Freedom House's request for financial assistance.

R. Strong stated that Robyn Davis, President of Freedom House, met with the Mayor and there are some concerns regarding the financial situation of Freedom House at this point and time. R. Davis was asking the Mayor if there were any resources available to help Freedom House until additional funding is received. R. Strong stated that he had mentioned that funding of families is a priority in the annual and five year plan for both the Brown County Housing Authority and the Green Bay Housing Authority. He offered to place this item on the agenda so that R. Davis could appear and the Authority could decide if they would like to fund or not.

R. Davis distributed a folder of information to the Authority members. Freedom House was started back in 1992 by a small group of churches in Green Bay to address the issue of homelessness. They are located on St. Anthony Drive. The mission is to meet the short term needs of homeless families with children such as shelter, clothing, food, and medical assistance. The second and most important portion of the organization is the life advancement part. The life advancement part is going beyond meeting the immediate needs and looking for ways to help families transition back into the community as self-sustaining families. Freedom House looks at the root causes of poverty. There are mandatory budget classes, mandatory parenting classes, job skills, resume writing, etc. Freedom House also offers counseling and optional bible studies. Each family goes through an 8 to 12 week program and during that time each family is matched up with a case manager who will help the family set long term and short term goals and hold them accountable to those goals with the expectation that upon graduation from the program, they will be equipped to transition back into the community so that they do not need to come back. Over the last 17 years, Freedom House has had a 95% success rate with families succeeding once they leave program and not returning.

R. Davis stated that there is a need for an organization like Freedom House because more than 70% of Americans are one or two paychecks away from being homeless. Currently, the largest growing segment of the homeless population is families with children. We need to equip the adults with the tools to live in a healthy environment and show the children also what is needed so that the cycle of poverty and homelessness is broken.

F. Davis stated that a new program this year through Freedom House is After Care. Freedom House is able to track a family's progress once they are able to leave to ensure that the programming is successful and when a family does move out they are able to successfully pay their bills, keep their home clean, parenting, etc. The After Care Coordinator conducts weekly visits and we train "guardian angels" to walk along beside the families after they leave. If it is found that a family needs a little more training in a certain area they can be brought back in for that additional training.

F. Davis stated that finances are required in order to provide the services of Freedom House and like so many other nonprofits there has been a downturn in the amount of donations during these hard times. Freedom House has experienced a 30 to 40 percent drop in what they have received and this has created a large gap in the budget. The Board of Directors has looked at the budget over the last few months from June to September and the Board has directed Freedom House to begin to make cuts in staff. The need for the services of Freedom House has not decreased and in this economic climate it is going to increase. In 2007 there were over 600 homeless students in Green Bay. In 2008 there were 735 homeless students in Green Bay. For the last five years there has been a waiting list for Freedom House and there is an average of ten to eighteen families on the list at all times. Currently there are 20 families on the Brown County (in town) waiting list and 7 families on the outside of Brown County (out of town) waiting list. The in town waiting list has preference/top priority. Currently the stays at Freedom House are averaging a little longer than in the past because a successful transition is to move into permanent housing and obtain employment, and with the economic climate, employment is much more difficult to obtain. Freedom House has eliminated three positions so far, Program Director, Case Manager, and Office Manager. The responsibilities of those positions are being disbursed amongst the remaining staff; however, the Board has now directed them to make even further reductions. In response to the Board's request another executive position was eliminated and there will be across the board salary reductions.

F. Davis stated that donations are primarily from individuals, corporate, and organizations such as churches. Typically at this time of year they receive more donations because people are looking to give before the end of the year. In the summer they did an appeal letter as they saw the numbers dipping and this is something that they normally would not have to do. Usually they only have to do a holiday appeal letter. The major fundraiser is held in September of each year. A grant writer was hired on a contractual basis to assist with beefing up the core document that they already have. The goal is to try to hit some funding sources that would be available in 2009 and then to launch a full scale grant seeking campaign in January 2010. The grant portion of their budget is very small so they hope to increase this. In addition, they want to convert some of their one or two time donors into monthly donors so they can develop a more consistent monthly income. There is going to be a website overhaul and hopefully people will start giving online. A PR campaign is going to be initiated to raise public awareness and support.

R. Davis stated that the \$60,000.00 request would help Freedom House make the bridge over to 2010.

M. Welch asked if the Authority does give the \$60,000.00 grant, where that would place Freedom House short and long term. Proactive steps were mentioned but does she see light at the end of the tunnel?

R. Davis stated that she does see light at the end of the tunnel. She is encouraged by the steps the Board is taking and by the fact that staff is committed to continuing to serve the families as they always have even though they are taking a salary reduction for at least the next four months. She is also encouraged by the work the grant writer is doing and some of the opportunities he has already identified that Freedom House will be able to look into. There are partnerships that they have formed out in the community that are encouraging and fundraisers that will be coming up.

R. Strong asked what funds do come in every month and is there commitments for January, February, and March where there is definite money coming in to keep Freedom House going. How does the \$60,000.00 add to that?

R. Davis distributed the figures from October 2006 to October 2009 to give the Authority the history of what they are tracking from. She can't guarantee what people will give. There is a pledge made by an anonymous donor to match dollar per dollar up to \$68,000.00 from now until the end of December. In previous years that has assisted in taking Freedom House from November to January. She has made phone calls to a number of donors and they are planning on continuing to honor the commitments they have made in the past. The 60,000.00 would get them over a two month hump. She has not had time to talk with the accountant to see with the last cut of the executive director how it would affect how much money they need. Because of that recent position elimination, the grant from the Authority should now take them further than two months. Also, December and January are big months for donations.

R. Strong stated that this request is also going to the Green Bay Housing Authority. Freedom House has done good things for the community through the years with little assistance from government programs. His concern is that this money does carry Freedom House for two more months and then the resources aren't there and they close. He would want to be part of how to solve the problem rather than just carrying them over for two months and they still close.

D. Hallet stated that the Authority has not done something like this before and it would be setting a precedent so she would want the Authority to really think about this.

R. Strong stated that if the Authority did decide to do this it would be justified because one of the goals in the five year program is to help homeless families.

P. Kendle stated that before the Authority could consider anything, we would have to see exactly where Freedom House is at and he thinks the Authority would want

to look at the shortfall on a monthly basis rather than a lump sum. The Authority could fill in the gaps as they go along and when they no longer need the Authority they would step back. The winter months are the ones that he would want to focus on. He would like to see an update to the information that has been presented to the Authority.

D. Hallet stated that at this time we would wait to get some more feedback from R. Davis.

The Authority stated that when R. Davis has the information ready to let R. Hallet know and a special meeting date could be looked into.

6. Discussion and action on renewing the BCHA student internship authorization for the Spring, 2010 semester and authorization for temporary help while the Senior Accountant position is vacant and through a familiarization period afterward.

R. Hallet stated that for the temporary help, the cost will now be split between the Brown County Housing Authority, the Green Bay Housing Authority, and the Redevelopment Authority. The Brown County Housing Authority would only have to pay for 5 hours per week.

A motion was made by R. Aicher and seconded by P. Kendle to approve renewing the BCHA student internship authorization for the Spring, 2010 semester and authorization for 5 hours per week of temporary help while the Senior Accountant position is vacant and through a familiarization period afterward. Motion carried.

7. Discussion and possible action in response to Brown County Board of Supervisors' requests and inquiries made at the October 21, 2009 presentation regarding the HCV program.

R. Hallet distributed an updated response sheet to the Authority.

R. Strong stated that the intern, J. Lopez, listened to the tape of the meeting and tried to take down all requests and inquiries of the Brown County Board of Supervisors.

R. Hallet stated that the first item is about the waiting list and clarifying the preferences on the waiting list. She distributed a summary of the waiting list and admission procedures and how long it takes to process the applicants. The issue with some of the information from the power point in regards to the waiting list is that the power point stated applicants being pulled off the list as of a certain date and she recently found out that the date was actually the date the applicants applied. The wrong date was linked to the wrong description, which led to confusion.

The Authority felt that the information provided was an appropriate response but to make it known that this is for a typical case but is not representative of every case, because sometimes you are waiting for information from the client or other components.

R. Hallet stated that the next item was regarding the recommendation of the County Board to close the waiting list. The day after this presentation she did receive the official request to close the waiting list and we do need to respond to that. Her personal thought is that now that the County Board has been provided with more education regarding the program they may feel differently about it and it might be wise for them to take another vote.

C. Law stated that there was significant discussion around this issue at the meeting and he believes Supervisor Theisen verbalized that what is being said is that if the waiting list is closed then we are going to get down to that 4th non preference list sooner.

C. Law stated that in order to close the list, the Admin Plan would have to be changed. The Admin Plan requires that the list can't be closed unless there are 15 months that we are unable to process what is on the current waiting list and that is not the case. We would also have to have two public hearings. There are several things that would need to be done before the waiting list could be closed and it would take a significant amount of time.

M. Welch stated that closing the list may actually end up giving non residents a greater access than what they currently have and it is worthwhile to confirm with the County Board if they are sure that this is the solution we want to bring forward. One of the primary issues was serving non residents and this would exasperate that problem.

The Authority felt that the response to the County Board should be letting them know what it entails to close the list and that we are prepared to start this and then also state some of the concerns on what could be the outcome. If they indeed want the list closed then we will start working through the steps to accomplish that.

R. Hallet stated that the next item was regarding how HUD determines the payment the BCHA receives. John Finger from HUD did help explain this to the County Board but it was felt that it would be helpful to have it available in writing as well. This is something that would need to come from HUD.

R. Hallet stated that the next item was a question of what the average length is that someone is on the program. She has thought of way that this information could be obtained and is talking with D. Payne to obtain that information.

R. Hallet stated that the next item is regarding the question of how many of the City services are HCV clients using. Her response at the time of the presentation was that there is a perception that HCV recipients are using more than their fair share of community resources but the statistics on the 911 calls and arrests records do not validate that. After she thought this through some more, it probably is true that lower income people do utilize more community services but that is not because they are on HCV but because they are low income. They may in fact be using fewer services because of being on HCV and are able to subsidize their income.

R. Strong stated that maybe he needs to sit down with Supervisor Nicholson to get a more definitive answer on what exactly he is looking for but thinks he is inquiring if we can track how many HCV clients have police calls, fire calls, inspection calls, etc. We could do an internal cross check on some items such as inspections calls, but it would be more difficult to track other services without investing a lot of money or staff time. We would explain to Supervisor Nicholson what it would take to get this information and see if he still believes it would be valuable.

R. Strong reiterated that except for the issue of closing the waiting list, these concerns are only questions of individual Board members and not directives from the County Board.

Supervisor Zima stated that the feeling is that we may be attracting individuals to our County because of the services we offer. He feels people come here and are not used to our rules and we don't want deterioration of our neighborhoods.

R. Hallet stated the next item is changing preferences and John Finger from HUD indicated that this is a possibility and this is something that will need to be investigated further to work out what the options are and how we can put them in place.

R. Hallet stated that there was a question on whether or not all applicants can be processed through the SAVE system, which is a system by which we can verify whether or not someone is here legally. It is not possible because the system requires the user to input their alien registration number. If they are not an alien they do not have an alien registration number.

(Note: R. Aicher had to leave due to another commitment.)

R. Hallet stated the next question, which is a very good one, was whether or not criminal prosecution is an option for fraud. There are different parties that would need to have a say in this so this will take some time to have a definitive answer.

Supervisor Zima stated that it would be good if we could have an option to criminally prosecute because then the word gets out that we don't tolerate anything and people will be prosecuted.

Supervisor Williams stated that if the District Attorney is not willing to take on these cases that we should let the County Board know and they will pursue it further.

R. Hallet stated that the next item was a concern by Supervisor Williams about our procedure for removing participants from the program as soon as criminal charges are filed against them.

Supervisor Williams stated that this did not need to be addressed because it is something that he expresses at every meeting due to clients he has worked with for which this is a concern.

R. Hallet stated that the last item was if the County Board could take over the authority of the Brown County Housing Authority. She referenced another handout that cites both HUD and State Statutes that explain this.

R. Hallet asked if the final letter addressing all of the questions/inquiries of the County Board should come from the Authority or the Administrator.

The Authority has directed R. Hallet to draft the letter from the Board and then email it to them for review/feedback.

8. Discussion and possible action about Brown County utilizing HUD Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Vouchers.

R. Hallet stated that the Veteran Affairs did a study of which communities have the largest number of homeless veterans and they were able to partner with HUD to have some special vouchers designated to those communities to help the veterans. Green Bay was identified as one of the communities that do have a large number of homeless veterans. Somehow, we were not allocated the vouchers specific to the veterans. What HUD is now looking to do is "borrow" some of the vouchers that were given to other communities, specifically Racine and Milwaukee, and let them be used here in Brown County. It is possible that in the future Brown County will get their own vouchers since it has been brought to HUD's attention that Green Bay was missed.

R. Strong stated that with the VASH Vouchers the veterans are treated differently in that they might have a criminal background, adverse experiences, had violations, or some other things that would normally disqualify them from the HCV program but eligible with the VASH Vouchers. This is going after the unique group of people who have served this country.

R. Hallet stated that case management is required by the Veteran Affairs. Essentially everything will be run the same way except we are not allowed to do background checks except for sex offender registry.

M. Welch wondered if this should be tabled because while he is compassionate about veterans and what they have done for this country, this has the potential of blowing up with the pressure we are getting of who is in the program. He would like to make sure we have considered this and all the consequences.

A motion was made by M. Welch and seconded by P. Kendle to hold this over until the next meeting of the Brown County Housing Authority. Motion carried.

BILLS:

A motion was made by P. Kendle and seconded by M. Welch to approve the payment of the bills. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

The financial report was received and placed on file.

STAFF REPORT:

9. Finalization of Housing Choice Voucher Contract between the BCHA and Integrated Community Solutions, Inc., with the addition of language that Brown County and BCHA named additionally insured on the Professional Liability Insurance Coverage.

F. Hallet stated that ICS was able to secure the insurance that was required for the contract between the BCHA and ICS.

F. Strong stated that the Authority has already authorized the contract and we are now advising you that the contract has been amended to include this and the date will be changed to December 1 when the insurance goes into effect.

10. Status of BCHA budget.

F. Hallet stated that normally at the November meeting the Authority would be presented with a budget for the upcoming year, but since we are short staffed and we would like the new Senior Accountant to be involved with the BCHA budget, we are holding off on preparing this budget.

F. Strong stated that second interviews have been conducted to fill the Senior Accountant position and background checks are being done on two of the applicants.

A motion was made by P. Kendle and seconded by M. Welch to adjourn the meeting at 5:26 p.m. Motion carried.